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NOTES ON HEINE

I

There is scarcely another poet who has challenged critical investigation to a greater degree than does Heine. His life and works, his technique, his sources and literary relations have been furnishing the subject-matter of innumerable commentaries, articles, and dissertations, and it is safe to suppose that, while these lines are taking shape, a successful doctorandus is just penning the conclusion of a literary syllogism with Heine as the major premise.

These facts need not surprise us. Heine was a romanticist, and romanticism, even in its barren beginnings, is avowedly rich in the cosmopolitanism of its sources and material. Add to this the creative genius and the virtuosity of a Heine, and the popularity of the subject is adequately accounted for.

In spite of the many excellent results obtained, this mine of scientific endeavor is far from being exhausted. Every renewed effort is likely to lay bare another vein of the richest ore which has hitherto escaped the hammer of the indefatigable miner. Once exposed to the eager-eyed seeker of riches, such a vein may be traced to a bed of untold treasures; it may lose itself labyrinthically in the endless field of poetic expression; it may be efferent or afferent, and, again, it may lead—nowhere. To encourage renewed efforts in two directions is the purpose of these lines.

In the *Gartenlaube* of 1884, p. 113, Eduard Engel prints for the first time Heine's famous "Memoiren" *in extenso*. After quoting Heine's dedicatory introduction, the author goes on to say,

Die vorstehende Widmung ist foliiert von Seite 1 bis 5. Auf der Rückseite des ersten Blattes steht das Brouillon eines bisher noch nie gedruckten Gedichtanfanges, es ist ein erster Entwurf, der nur die flüchtigen Gedanken festhalten sollte und noch der Durcharbeitung im Einzelnen bedurft hätte. Correcturen finden sich darin, wie in allem, was Heine geschrieben, ausserordentlich viele. Die Strophen lauten:

Manch kostbar edle Perle birgt
 Der Ocean; manch schöne Blume
 Küsst nie ein Menschenblick, nur stumme
 Waldeinsamkeit schaut ihr Erröthen
 Und trostlos in der Wildniszöde
 Vergeudet sie die süßen Düfte.

Wenngleich tobsüchtig dort der Wind
 Die Fluten peitschet, dasz sie heulen,
 Und ihnen straks zu Hülfe eilen
 Entsetzlich gähnend aus den Tiefen
 Die Ungethüme, die dort schliefen—

Engel cites the following lines as a variant of the first stanza:

Wohl manche edle Perle birgt
 Der Ocean in dunkler Thruhe,
 Wohl manche Blume in der Wildniz
 Erröthet ungesehn, die süßen Düfte
 Vergeudend an die stumme Oede.

Elster¹ prints part of Engel's explanatory material and the three stanzas by Heine, stating that "Kleinigkeiten, die wir dem Text nicht einverleiben mochten, mögen hier [i.e., in the appendix] noch eine Stelle finden."

The "flüchtigen Gedanken" which "noch der Durcharbeitung im Einzelnen bedurft hätte" did not originate with Heine, at least not those which are expressed in the first stanza, and, particularly, in its variant, a fact which was noted neither by Engel nor by Elster, nor, to my best knowledge, by any other commentator. We find them without extended search in the famous "Elegy" by Thomas Gray:²

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
 The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
 Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

It would be interesting to determine—perhaps by examining the original "Brouillon"—which of the two, the first stanza or its variant, takes poetic precedence. But whether or not this priority

¹ Elster, *Heinrich Heines sämtliche Werke*, II, 507.

² 1716-71.

is determinable, it is of value to note what distinctly romantic turn the obviously anti-Humean philosophy of Gray assumed in the alembic of Heine's creative imagination. Attention is called to such terms as "stumme Waldeinsamkeit" and "trostlos in der Wildniszöde."

II

Traces of Heine's influence on nineteenth-century lyrical poetry may be discovered at the most unsuspected places. The imagination can scarcely picture two poets so widely divergent in character, artistic temperament, and choice of poetic material as are Heinrich Heine and the Low-German poet Fritz Reuter. The last-named poet had not yet reached the pinnacle of his fame when death was sealing Heine's lips forever. Reuter, of course, had read Heine, though we know of but one occasion on which he took public notice of him. We are told of an utterance by Reuter in the course of a speech at Eisenach, September 3, 1870, in which the Low-German poet pointed out that "Die Zeiten seien vorüber, in welchen ein jüdischer Dichter zur Verherrlichung des Landesfeindes in deutscher Sprache das Gedicht 'Nach Frankreich zogen zwei Grenadier' verfassen konnte."¹ A somewhat more eloquent testimonial of Reuter's acquaintance with Heine's muse is to be found by comparing the following two stanzas, respectively by Heine and Reuter.

Heine:²

Keine Messe wird man singen,
Keinen Kadosch wird man sagen,
Nichts gesagt und nichts gesungen
Wird an meinen Sterbetagen.

Reuter:³

Köster lüdt de Klocken nich,
Preister bedt nich sine Sprüch;
Ahn Gebet un ahn Gelüd
Drögen s' di mal still bisid.

¹ Seelmann, *Reuters Werke*, I, 58.

² *Lamentationen*, 12.

³ From "Kein Hüsung," Seelmann's *Reuter*, VII, 131.

It would certainly overtax the meaning of philological evidence if we were attempting to build conclusive proofs of influence in the larger sense on these chips of poetic parallelism, convincing as they doubtless are as such. Yet it should be remembered that it is by untiring tapping, sounding, and probing that we uncover the secret channels which interlink the artistic expressions of all nations and all ages.

III

In 1871 there was published by S. Zickel, New York, a volume¹ containing poems and aphorisms selected from the posthumous writings of Heinrich Heine, ostensibly published for the first time by Adolf Strodtmann. Following is a reproduction of the title-page:

LETZTE
GEDICHTE UND GEDANKEN
VON
HEINRICH HEINE

AUS DEM NACHLASSE DES DICHTERS
ZUM ERSTEN MALE VERÖFFENTLICHT

NEW YORK
S. ZICKEL, NR. 19. DEY-STREET
1871

Even to those who are not intimately acquainted with Heine bibliography it would seem odd that Strodtmann should avail himself of a New York firm for the publication of such an important addition to Heine literature, particularly in view of the fact that, only a few years previous, his noted biography of the poet had been published in Berlin.² On the face of it, there may be room for the argument that during the period of the German national revival of 1870-71 no German publisher would have lent himself to the promulgation of such invectives as are contained in "Die Menge tut es,"³ "1649-1793-???",⁴ and "Berlin."⁵

¹ 8vo, pp. xii+196.

² *H. Heine's Leben und Werke*, Berlin, 1867.

³ P. 51.

⁴ P. 54.

⁵ P. 5.

Examining the preface which appears over Strodtmann's name we are at once struck by the opening statement, "Zwischen dem Tode H. Heine's und der jetzt endlich ermöglichten Veröffentlichung seines literarischen Nachlasses ist ein Zeitraum von mehr als dreizehn Jahren verflossen." Heine died in 1856, a fact which would point to 1869 and not to 1871 as the year of the first publication of the *Letzte Gedichte und Gedanken*. As a matter of fact Strodtmann edited the *Letzte Gedichte und Gedanken* (hereafter called *LG*) in 1869, in Hamburg, as a supplementary volume to his edition of *Heinrich Heine's sämtliche Werke*. Following is the title-page of the Hamburg edition:¹

LETZTE
GEDICHTE UND GEDANKEN
VON
HEINRICH HEINE

AUS DEM NACHLASSE DES DICHTERS
ZUM ERSTEN MALE VERÖFFENTLICHT

Il morto Enrico poetava ancora

ZWEITE AUFLAGE

HAMBURG
HOFFMANN UND CAMPE
1869

A comparison of the prefaces of the two editions shows a number of omissions from *LG* New York for which obviously Strodtmann is not responsible. Nor does the content of the portions omitted furnish any clew which might lead to the reason for their exclusion. Apparently the New York publisher was anxious, for technical or commercial considerations, to keep the stock of the book within the limit of thirteen sheets of sixteen pages each, that is 208 pages, which is the exact size of the book. Unable to apply his Procrustean method to the text, he attacked the preface, eliminating a sentence here and a paragraph there, until the desired length was obtained. When, later, in the appendix,² he reprints with faithful accuracy a

¹ I was unable to secure a copy of the first edition.

² P. 192.

note by the editor, “. . . . Aus derselben Ursache habe ich ein ähnliches, die Grenze des Wohlanstandes allzu muthwillig überschreitendes Gedicht: ‘Citronia,’ bis auf die in der Vorrede citierten Schlussverse, ebenfalls unterdrückt,” he had the misfortune of forgetting that the aforesaid poem had fallen a victim of his editorial pencil.

From the evidence presented above it is, therefore, obvious that the *LG* New York edition is an unauthorized reprint of the *LG* Hamburg edition, and as such has no right to the publisher’s claim, “zum ersten Male veröffentlicht.”

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